

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Republican Vision of National Security:

Republicans Jeopardize Security of U.S. Ports and Workers...*Again*
Slaughter Raises Concerns Over Impact of Oman Free Trade Act

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today expressed her deep concern over the national security and economic implications of the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. The bill was approved by the House today by a vote of 221 to 205.

"Republicans seem dead-set on turning our port security over to foreign corporations. Just a few months after the outcry over their Dubai Ports debacle, they want us to pass a new bill that will give Americans a new reason to worry about who controls their ports."

On Tuesday, leading Democrats revealed that loopholes in the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement would allow foreign corporations, including Dubai Ports World, to establish front companies in Oman and through them take control of American ports.

"This Republican Congress is once again ignoring the overwhelming majority of Americans who are concerned about our border and port security." Rep. Slaughter said. **"In**
stead, Republicans are listening only to well-connected business lobbyists who hope to turn this bill into profits for their shareholders."

Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD-3) offered an amendment to the bill addressing the port security issue, but Rules Committee Republicans refused to make it in order. Congresswoman Slaughter rejected the justification offered: that to make the amendment in order would interfere with the bill's fast track status.

"National security is more important than forcing bills through this House as quickly as possible," she said. **"Republicans may want things done fast, but Democrats want them done right."**

A DANGEROUS ECONOMIC IMPACT

Rep. Cardin also introduced a second amendment to the Oman Free Trade Act which would have required workers in Oman to be granted basic labor standards as defined by the International Labor Organization. Republicans refused to make it in order.

Rep. Slaughter expressed concern about the impact the legislation would have on American workers as well as those in Oman.

"Workers abroad won't be the only ones this bill abandons. NAFTA should have taught us already about what free trade agreements can do to our labor force here at home," Rep. Slaughter said.

"But as usual, if it's good for Big Business, it's a top priority for this Republican Congress - no matter the consequences, " she said.

BACKGROUND: DEMOCRATIC RECORD ON PORT SECURITY

In addition to jeopardizing the economic security of foreign and domestic workers, the Republican-authored Oman Free Trade Agreement gives Americans a new reason to worry about the security of their ports.

This is not the first time the Republican leadership has blocked Congressional Democratic efforts to boost America's port security. Below is a brief overview of efforts by House Democrats to enhance port security since 9/11. All have been rejected by the Republican leadership.

Time After Time, Republicans Have Rejected Democratic Efforts to Increase Investments in Port Security

2005 Vote #187 - May 18, 2005 - H.R. 1817, FY 2006 Homeland Security Authorization

Democrats offered a substitute to the Homeland Security Authorization bill that would have provided an additional \$400 million in funding for port security in FY 2006, including doubling the number of new overseas port inspectors. Unfortunately, Republicans defeated the Democratic substitute by a vote of 196 to 230.

2004 Vote #243 - June 16, 2004 - H.R. 4567, FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations

Democrats sought to offer an amendment that would have increased funding for port and container security by \$400 million in FY 2005. Unfortunately, Republicans voted to block consideration of this amendment.

2003 Vote #305 - June 24, 2003 - H.R. 2555, FY 2004 Homeland Security Appropriations

Democrats sought to offer an amendment that would have increased port and maritime security by \$500 million in FY 2004. Unfortunately, Republicans voted to block consideration of this amendment.

2003 Vote #103 - April 3, 2003 - H.R. 1559, FY 2003 Wartime Supplemental

Democrats sought to offer an amendment that would have increased funding to improve port and infrastructure security by \$722 million in FY 2003. Unfortunately, Republicans voted to block consideration of this amendment.

2001 Vote #454 - November 28, 2001 - H.R. 3338, FY 2002 Defense Appropriations/Emergency Supplemental

Democrats sought to offer an amendment that would have increased Coast Guard port security operations by \$165 million and direct grants to individual ports for security assessments and enhancements by \$200 million in FY 2002. Unfortunately, Republicans voted to block consideration of this amendment.

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